

I, therefore, urge the Government of India and reiterate the demand made by the my leader and hon. Chief Minister of Odisha, Shri Naveen Patnaik, to accord Special Category Status on Odisha on account of natural disasters it faces and the damage done by them to 4.5 crore people of Odisha.

DR. AMAR PATNAIK (Odisha): Sir, I associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

SHRI M. MOHAMED ABDULLA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

DR. KANIMOZHI NVN SOMU (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

SHRI ABIR RANJAN BISWAS (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (SHRI BHUBANESWAR KALITA): Shri Anil Desai — Not present. Shrimati Vandana Chavan.

Need for amending the POCSO Act to revise age of Consent

SHRIMATI VANDANA CHAVAN (Maharashtra): Sir, this year marks the tenth anniversary of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, commonly referred to as POCSO. While its enactment was definitely a watershed moment in the history of child rights in India, we must also take this opportunity to reflect on some of its shortcomings.

Section 2(d) of the POCSO Act has defined a child as an individual under the age of 18. This has led to the suffering of many young couple between the age of 16 and 18 who are in consensual and non-exploitative relationships. Because the consent of a child is immaterial, a genuine romantic relationship, which has mutual consent from both sides, can get embroiled in the criminal justice system.

Several High Courts of the country have recognized the normalcy of these relationships and pointed out that the Act was meant to protect minors from sexual abuse and not to criminalize consensual romantic relationships amongst adolescents.

There have been several instances of misuse of the POCSO Act, especially by parents who want to punish their children from attempting to exercise their autonomy

in who they wanted to marry. Many a time, a couple elopes fearing opposition from parents, resulting in situation where families file a case with police who then book the boy for rape under the POCSO Act.

Hence, there is an urgent need to reform the law to revise the age of consent and prevent the criminalization of older adolescents engaged in consensual and non-exploitative acts. Thank you.

DR. AMAR PATNAIK (Odisha): Sir, I associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

DR. FAUZIA KHAN (Maharashtra): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

DR. SASMIT PATRA (Odisha): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

SHRI ABIR RANJAN BISWAS (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

MS. DOLA SEN (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

DR. V. SIVADASAN (Kerala): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

SHRIMATI SHANTA CHHETRI (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

SHRI JAWHAR SIRCAR (West Bengal): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

SHRI M. MOHAMED ABDULLA (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

DR. KANIMOZHI NVN SOMU (Tamil Nadu): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

SHRIMATI MAHUA MAJI (JHARKHAND): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

SHRIMATI JEBI MATHER HISHAM (Kerala): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

SHRI SANDOSH KUMAR P (Kerala): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

**Need for approval of funds for the work of doubling the railway line on the
Billi-Chopan-Chunar Railway Section**

श्री राम शकल (नाम निर्देशित) : महोदय, मेरे गृह जनपद क्षेत्र के अंतर्गत चोपन-चुनार एकल रेल खंड कोयला व अन्य खनिजों की ढुलाई का प्रमुख रेल खंड एवं कोल इंडिया कॉरिडोर है। इस रेल खंड के दोहरीकरण होने से उत्तर प्रदेश के आदिवासी अंचल सोनभद्र के साथ-साथ झारखंड राज्य की एक बड़ी आबादी भी लाभान्वित होगी और यह आदिवासी अंचल के लिए लाइफलाइन का काम करेगी। इस रेल खंड से जुड़े चोपन-सिंगरौली, चोपन-गढ़वा रोड, सिंगरौली-कटनी तथा शक्तिनगर-करैला रोड रेल खंडों पर दोहरीकरण निर्माण कार्य तीव्र गति से चल रहा है, जो कि मार्च 2023-24 तक पूरा होने का लक्ष्य है। एक मात्र रेल खंड चोपन-चुनार पर ही दोहरीकरण कार्य कराया जाना शेष है। इस रेल खंड की स्वीकृति वित्त बजट 2020-21 में हो चुकी है। इन रेल खंडों पर दोहरीकरण का निर्माण कार्य पूरा होने से इन रेल खंडों पर सड़क मार्ग की जगह रेल मार्ग से कोयले की ज्यादा से ज्यादा ढुलाई, पर्यावरण शुद्धता, यात्री एवं मालगाड़ियों का संचालन भी बढ़ेगा तथा रेलवे की आय में भी वृद्धि होगी। चोपन-चुनार रेल खंड का फाइनल लोकेशन सर्वे का कार्य उत्तर मध्य रेलवे द्वारा पूर्ण कर रेलवे बोर्ड, रेल मंत्रालय में भेजा जा चुका है।

मेरा आपके माध्यम से रेल मंत्री जी से निवेदन है कि उल्लेखित तथ्यों को दृष्टिगत रखते हुए बिल्ली-चोपन-चुनार रेल खंड पर लाइन के दोहरीकरण कार्य हेतु केन्द्रीय मंत्रिमंडल मामलों की आर्थिक समिति (CCEA) द्वारा धनराशि स्वीकृत किये जाने की कृपा करें, जिससे यह रेल दोहरीकरण परियोजना भी शीघ्र पूरी हो सके, धन्यवाद।

DR. AMAR PATNAIK (Odisha): Sir, I associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.

DR. SASMIT PATRA (Odisha): Sir, I also associate myself with the submission made by the hon. Member.